

## Emergence and Development of Task-Orientated Intergovernmental Network: An Explanation for China's Partner Assistance Model\*

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Chunyong ZHENG, Yipin WU

College of Public Administration, Zhejiang Gongshang University

Email: zcy0603@163.com, yipinwu@foxmail.com

### Abstract:

This paper concentrates on China's partner assistance phenomena. It adopted network analysis methods, task-orientated organization theories and institutional evolution theories to construct an analysis framework for task-orientated intergovernmental network, and apply it to analyze China's partner assistance practices since the 1980s. The results show that China's partner assistance virtually builds a task-orientated intergovernmental network. This network is evolving under overlapping, embedding and reconstructing effects. According to the emergence and development process of task-orientated intergovernmental network, China's central government plays a critical role in this process. The relationship between nodes, the relations between assistance providers and recipients are not properly, many interactions among local governments need to be formalized.

**Key words:** Partner assistance, Task-orientated intergovernmental network, Intergovernmental relations

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Partner assistance is a special phenomenon in China's intergovernmental relations. The development of partner assistance promotes the network trend of China's intergovernmental relations. However, neither foreign researcher nor Chinese domestic scholars show interest on partner assistance. Although 2008 Wenchuan great earthquake attracted attentions from all sections of the society, there is a few of valuable research on this subject (Le, 2010, Liu, 2010). Overall speaking, scholars in this field focus their attention on horizontal intergovernmental cooperation (Feiock, 2007; Savitch and Vogel 2000), and tend to apply social network analysis methods to discuss regional network governance (Thurmaier and Wood, 2002; Leroux and Carr 2010; Xing, 2011). We argue that assistance partner is worth more attention and is an important subject. This research constructs a concept of task-orientated Intergovernmental network, and applies this framework to study China's partner assistance, and to make up the defect of the existing research.

The structure of this paper is as follows.

First, we review the existing literature on intergovernmental relations, mostly made by American and Chinese scholars, and describe the characters of task-orientated intergovernmental relations.

Second, the second part studies the history from the perspectives of the assistance providers and recipients that Tibet province received assistances from various regions and the history that Zhejiang province supplied assistance to backward areas, and discusses the emergence and development of task-orientated Intergovernmental network.

Third, the third part analyzes partner assistances toward Xinjiang province, Qinghai province, the Three Gorges Dams areas, and the Wenchuan great earthquake area. Through conducting comparative case study, we find overlapping, embedding and reconstructing dynamics to promote the evolution of task-orientated intergovernmental relations.

In the analysis part, we discuss how to institutionalize and formalize the partner assistance, how to divide the responsibilities of central and local governments, to coordinate local governments in different regions, and how to improve the effect of partner assistance by performance evaluation.

At last, we conclude the paper and discuss directions for further research.

## 2. FROM THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS TO THE TASK-ORIENTATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL NETWORK

Prior to the 1980s, western scholars focused on the central and sub-national relations, and then shift the focus from constitutional norms to the dynamics and meanwhile proposed a new subject as horizontal intergovernmental relations (Paul R.Dommel, 1991; Helen Sullivan & Chris Skelcher, 2002; Julie Cencula Olberding, 2002). Chinese scholars' research on intergovernmental relations surrounded three subjects, the theoretical study of intergovernmental relations (Lin, 1998, Xie, 2000, Yang, 2005), the vertical intergovernmental relations study (Zhang, 2005; Xue, 2010), and the horizontal intergovernmental relations study (Zhang, 2003). After 20 years development, new concepts, theories including "functions and responsibilities isomorphism" (Zhu and Zhang, 2004), "Authorizing system" (Xue, 2010), "the pressure system" (Rong, 2009), "local governmental competitions" (Liu, 2007), "local governmental cooperation" (Yang, 2008), "regional public governance" (Chen, 2003), "intergovernmental governance" (Liu, 2007), and "Holistic governance" (Zhu, 2008). These contributions remarkably enrich the theories of China's intergovernmental relations. Meanwhile, research frameworks from other disciplines, including game theory, transaction cost theory have been introduced into intergovernmental relations study. However, network analysis method which has been used prevalently in public policy study, public organization has not yet been applied in to this subject. Some scholars argue that, as China applies centralized system, and network analysis is characterized by de-centralized, network analysis method is not applicable for China's intergovernmental problems. We consider that from the perspective of complex system theory and complex network theory, governmental organizations at various levels in fact are set in an organizational network which is essentially a relation network. Therefore, we can explore and build intergovernmental relation network theory, and use to study China's local intergovernmental relations particularly.

### 3. EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF TASK-ORIENTATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The task-oriented Intergovernmental network prevails in China's government management practices, especially partner assistance task-orientated Intergovernmental network. Partner assistance is a relation that is dominated by the central government or upper government, in which economically developed regions or enterprises supply assistance to backward regions and less competitive enterprises. Divided by the nature of assistance recipients, partner assistance has three modes, the assistance to border areas, the assistance to the areas suffering huge damage, and the assistance to major projects areas (Zhao, 2011). The implementation of partner assistance policies effectively narrows the gap among various regions, and plays critical roles to promote national unit and social stability. Meanwhile, as the policies develop, the task-orientated intergovernmental network makes a great achievement, from simple to complex, from identity to diverse, from one-way assistance to mutual interaction, and evolves into a intergovernmental network with the extensive coverage, largest number of entities, and most compounded relations. The partner assistance intergovernmental relation network is worth of being studied.

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4. A            RECIPIENT            CENTERED            TASK            ORIENTATED  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL NETWORK

Since 1979, China proposed partner assistance, recipients of partner assistance include Tibet province, the three Gorges reservoir area, the distressed area of Guizhou province, Xinjiang province, Wenchuan great earthquake, Tibetan areas of Qinghai province, and other border areas. Assistance to Tibet province starts earliest and lasts for the longest time. Thereby, we select Tibet as typical case of recipient-centered partner assistance to explore task-orientated intergovernmental relation network.

According to the history of assistance toward Tibet province, we divide the emergence and development of intergovernmental relations to five phases,

The first phase (1979-1982), in order to facilitate the economic and social development of minority ethnic areas, the central government proposed at the China frontier work conference, April 1979 that “ to organize inner provinces and cities to support and supply assistance to border areas as well as minority ethnic habitations”. The conference specified that Beijing supplied assistance to Inner Mongolia, Hebei province supplied assistance to Guizhou province, Jiangsu province supplied assistance toward Guangxi province and Xinjiang province, Shandong province assisted Qinghai province, Shanghai provided assistance to Yunnan province and Ningxia province, and whole country supply assistance to Tibet. In the March 1980, the central government convened the 1<sup>st</sup> Tibet work conference. The conference decided to strengthen the assistance to Tibet, but lacked specific policies to enact this decision. In May 1980, Hu Yaobang and Wang Li headed leaders of relevant departments at the central government to inspect and direct work. They announced tax exemption policies and fiscal support policies, but again these policies were lack of specific departments or local governments to take responsibilities.

The second phase (1983-1993), in August 1983, the State Council issued a decision, and assigned tasks to Sichuan province, Zhejiang province, and Shanghai, Tianjin to supply assistance to Tibet. Besides these four provinces and cities, Jiangsu province, Beijing and Shanxi province also take a few number of tasks to assist Tibet in November 1983. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tibet work conference in 1984, to celebrate the 20 anniversaries, the central government asked Beijing, Shanghai ,Tianjin, Jiangsu province, Fujian province, Shandong province, Sichuan province, Guangdong province, the Ministry of Water and Power, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing, and the State Bureau of Construction Materials to help Tibet build 43 middle and small size projects. These work promoted and deepened the assistance toward Tibet, and build a Intergovernmental network connecting four important cities and provinces, and combined the supplementary help from the central governments and other regions.

The third (1994-2000), in July 1994, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council convened the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tibet work conference. The conference issued the new decision. 14 provinces and cities built partner assistance relations with 7 cities in Tibet province.

Besides, 13 ministries and departments, 29 provinces and cities and 6city specifically designated in the state plan, state-owned enterprise built a public infrastructure system of energy, transportation and information, and the “62” project with impacts on agriculture, culture and education. At this phase, the tasks to assistance Tibet increased remarkably, and the relations network among local government developed. The relation between the central government and Tibetan local governments was developed and consolidated.

The 4<sup>th</sup> phase (2001-2009), in June 2001, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council convened the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tibet work conference. At the conference, the central government extended the original 10 year-plan to 15 years, and added 3 provinces and 17 state-owned enterprises to assist Tibet. Addition 29 counties in Tibet were added into the partner assistance program. Then, 18 provinces and cities, 61 ministries and departments and 17 state-owned enterprises joined assistance toward Tibet. In addition, the central government decided to invested and built 117 projects including Tibetan section of Qingzang railway. At this phase, the task-orientated intergovernmental network was improved largely and these leaks and defects were made up gradually.

The 5<sup>th</sup> phase (2010-present), in January 2010, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council convened the 5th Tibet work conference. This conference didn't change the former assistance program very much, which means that the Intergovernmental network to assist Tibet had been set up. Meanwhile, it is worth of noting that, this conference emphasized Tibet needed to broaden the cooperation with inner regions (Hu, 2010). It was the first time that “cooperation” was prioritized. In July 2011, Xi Jinping at partner assistance Tibet program proposed “to improve cooperation level and explore local potentials, to reach mutual benefits” (Xi, 2010). This statement shows that the top leaders of the central government had realized that after a long period assistance, Tibet had gained economic and social conditions, and the assistance therefore could turn from one-way assistance to mutual benefits and cooperation. This new strategic arrangement increased the motivations of assistance providers and improved the new trend of partner assistance toward Tibet.

Table 1 the evolution of intergovernmental network of partner assistance toward Tibet

	1980s	1990s		21 <sup>st</sup> century		
Recipient	Tibet autonomous region	Tibet autonomous region	7 areas	Tibet autonomous region	7 areas	77 counties
Provider	4 provinces and cities, and a few ministries of central government	29 provinces and cities, 13 ministries and departments, state owned enterprises, 6 cities specifically designated in State plan	15 provinces and cities	27 provinces and cities, 61 departments and ministries at central government, 5 cities specifically designated in state plan	18 provinces and cities	18 provinces and 17 state owned enterprises

Source: Liu Jianwen, Yang Long, From Voluntary Assistance to Mutual Benefit: A study on the local cooperation between Tibet and other provinces and cities, Social Science Academic Press, (Beijing, 2014)

In the development of partner assistance toward Tibet, central government and political mobilization played dominant roles. Assistance providers and recipients basically moved under directions of the central government. The partner assistance at first focused on frontier development and state defense, then emphasized anti-poverty, and shifted focus to economic development and social stability. At present, to improve living standard, protect ecosystem, and to promote national unity become the focus of assistance work.

## 5. THE PROVIDER-CENTERED TASK ORIENTATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL NETWORK

In contrast to the limited number of the recipients of assistance, the number of assistance providers is much larger. Taking example of partner assistance toward Tibet, in the 1990s, more than 29 provinces and cities took responsibilities to assist Tibet. Not only East and Middle China regions, but some west regions needed to join partner assistance to supply help. East developed provinces were pillar of partner assistance and carried important responsibilities in almost all assistance programs. We select Zhejiang Province which bears long-period task of partner assistance and analyzes its partner assistance intergovernmental relation network. Accordingly to the history of Zhejiang province's partner assistance, the emergence and development of its task orientated intergovernmental network can be divided into four phases.

The first phase (1983-1991), in 1979 when the central government first proposed "partner assistance" policies, it didn't assign task to Zhejiang province, and thereby its assistance work started since 1983. The central government pointed Zhejiang province, Sichuan province, Shanghai and Tianjin as the important providers of partner assistance toward Tibet. In

November 1983, when the central government specified the task and work of partner assistance, Zhejiang province took 7 assistance programs, including the feasibility study on Tibetan Naqu Chalong hydropower station, Lhasa Technical reform on oxygen workshop, technical reform of Tibetan medicine factory and so on. Afterwards, Zhejiang province took tasks to support “43” project of partner assistance toward Tibet program. Besides Tibet, Zhejiang province didn’t take task to assist other regions. Zhejiang province’s assistance toward Tibet limited in construction, and didn’t build one-to-one assistance relationship.

The second phase (1992-1997), Zhejiang province was assigned more assistance task. In 1992, the central government made the decision to ask 20 provinces and cities, 54 ministries and departments, and 10 large cities to build partner assistance relations toward cities and counties in the Three Gorges reservoir regions. Zhejiang province took the task to assist Linpei district of Chongqing city, and Ningbo city of Zhejiang province helped Wuyao developing district at Wangzhou district of Chongqing city. In 1994, Zhejiang province was assigned to assist Quna area at the Tibet autonomous region. Under the West development strategy, since 1996, Zhejiang province took responsibilities to assist Guangyuan city, Nanchong city and 12 counties (districts) in Sichuan province. Ningbo city assisted 12 distressed counties in the southeast and southwest Guizhou province. In 1997, Zhejiang province was assigned by the central government to build partner assistance relation with Hetian area of Xinjiang province. With 6 years, Zhejiang carried 4 large partner assistance programs. The provider-centered task orientated intergovernmental network developed quickly.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase (1998-2007), within the 10 years, Zhejiang province was not assigned new task. It is worth to note that the partner assistance provider and recipients changed gradually. Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Zhejiang province emphasized more on economic and trade cooperation, and worked to convert voluntary assistance to mutual benefit model. In 2004, Zhejiang province issued “Zhejiang province 2005-2007 partner assistance work guidance”. This guidance pointed out that “to explore new methods and strategies of partner assistance, to help distressed population lift out of poverty, promote both assistance and cooperation (Wu, 2005). It was not only political task, but economic motivation to drive Zhejiang province to maintain the partner assistance relation.

The fourth phase (2008-present), after 5.12 Wenchuan great earthquake in 2008, the central government made “one province helps one county” decision, and assigned Zhejiang province to supply assistance to Qingchuan county in Sichuan province to promote disaster recovery. After 3 years, the central government assigned partner assistance task toward Xinjiang province and the Zhejiang province took task to assist Aksu and Alar cities in Xinjiang province. Meanwhile, the central government assigned 6 coast developed provinces and cities, 21 ministries and departments, and 13 state-owned enterprise to assist Tibetan area in Qinghai province. In 2013, the State council fixed Hangzhou city, Zhejiang province to supply partner assistance to East Nanzhou area, Guizhou province, and Ningbo city, Zhejiang province to South Nanzhou area, Guizhou province. Since 2008, the central government specified the fiscal input on partner

assistance of local governments. The assistance fund for Wenchuan earthquake region should not be less than 10% of last year's fiscal revenue of local governments. The annual fund for Tibet should not less than 1‰ of last year's fiscal revenue of local governments. As a result, 2011 fund for Xinjiang partner assistance program increased 10%, and from 2012 to 2015, the fund increased 8% annually.

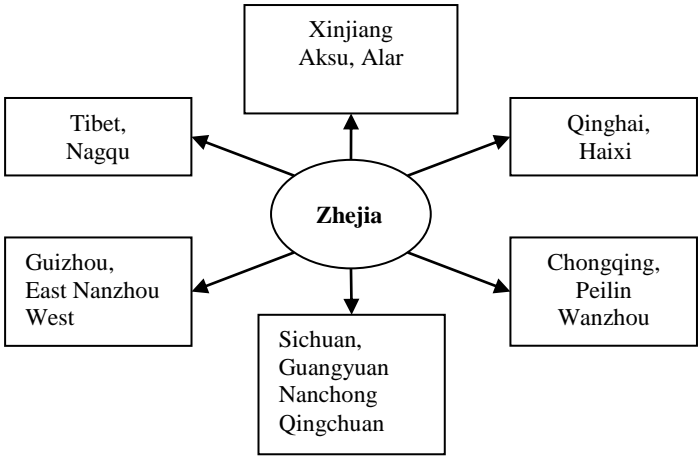


Figure 1 The task orientated intergovernmental network of Zhejiang assistance partner relations.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, the provider-centered intergovernmental network has four features. 1) This network follows different stages. National strategies, natural disasters, frontier problems could cause more task orientated intergovernmental network. 2) This network is divided by the nature of tasks, such as assistance toward border regions, assistance to the regions suffering devastating disasters, and assistance to large construction projects. 3) The relation between assistance providers and recipients are often affected by the interest of local governments and deviates from the expected goal. 4) The interaction between assistance providers and recipients relates to the commitment of the central government on programs. The stringer and more specific the policies are, the stronger the interaction between two sides becomes. As Zhejiang province successfully converted voluntary assistance toward recipients to mutual benefit assistance model, many other assistance providers imitated Zhejiang's tactics and the central government didn't forbid them.

6. THE DYNAMICS OF TASK ORIENTATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL NETWORK EVOLUTION: OVERLAPPING, EMBEDDING AND RECONSTRUCTING

<sup>1</sup> The Development and Reform Commission of the Zhejiang Province government, [http://www.zjdpc.gov.cn/art/2011/10/25/art\\_470\\_24.html](http://www.zjdpc.gov.cn/art/2011/10/25/art_470_24.html) ,(2011)



Task orientated intergovernmental network witnesses over thirty years' development. During this process, there are three important effects, overlapping, embedding and reconstructing.

The first is overlapping effect. China's partner assistance is quite complex, which contains both regular assistance and short-term assistance, both institutional arrangement that covers more than ten provinces and cities and assignment which only benefits a few places. The task orientated intergovernmental network at macro level is composed of networks at median levels. The median level task orientated intergovernmental networks include the partner assistance toward Tibet, partner assistance toward Xinjiang, partner assistance toward Qinghai, partner assistance toward Three Gorges Reservoir, and task orientated intergovernmental network toward Wenchuan earthquake, and anti-poverty intergovernmental network. Partner assistance networks toward Tibet, Xinjiang, Three Gorges are large networks with broader coverage and long-period, which construct the foundation of nationwide task orientated intergovernmental network. The partner assistance toward Qinghai is in fact an extension of the Tibet network, and is an important supplementary support for the partner assistance toward Tibet policies. The partner assistance toward Wenchuan earthquake is an outcome of disaster assistance network. The anti-poverty is different from other five networks, but essentially enjoys the same policies and supports as other fives. All these median networks overlap and accumulate to build the large and complex nationwide network.

Secondly, the embedding effect emphasizes imbedibility and multi-dimensional, which contains three features. At first, policy makers of partner assistance programs come from different agencies. Assistance programs toward Tibet, Xinjiang, and Wenchuan earthquake region were initiated by the Central committee of Communist party and the State Council. The partner assistance toward Three Gorges Reservoir was proposed by the Three Gorges Office at the State Council. The partner assistance toward Qinghai was formulated by the State Development and Reform Committee at the State Council. The anti-poverty task was formulated by anti-poverty development office at the State Council. Different authorities launch the partner assistance. The short-term assistance program is embedded into the long-term and broader program. For instance, in the partner assistance programs toward Tibet , Xinjiang and Wenchuan earthquake regions, the decision makers assigned detailed tasks and requirements, which made heavy task for the assistance providers. In contrast, in the anti-poverty programs, the performance evaluation is difficult, and therefore turns to be a light task.

Thirdly, the reconstructing dynamic is to adjust the original partner assistance intergovernmental relations, especially to change the relations between assistance providers and recipients. Three reasons produce this reconstructing dynamic, first, the provider can not complete assistance task or the effect of assistance is much lower than expectation. In this scenario, assistance program should be revised. Secondly, the assistance priorities and recipients undergo changes, and therefore decision makers need to reallocate the limited resources and make them more effectively help the recipients. Thirdly, the change of national development strategies also causes transformation of partner assistance program. There are two

types of change, quantitative change and qualitative change. Taking the example of South Xinjiang, in 1997, Aksu received assistance from Shanghai, Henan province; and Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous prefecture received assistance from Jiangxi. Kashgar received assistance from Tianjin and Shandong province. Hetian region received assistance from Beijing and Zhejiang province. In 2010, Aksu accepted assistance from Zhejiang province. The Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous prefecture received assistance from Jiangxi and Jiangsu. Kashgar received assistance from Guangdong, Shenzhen, Shanghai and Shandong. Hetian region received assistance from Beijing, Tianjian and Anhui province. The intergovernmental network underwent a large adjustment.

Table 2 the Adjustment on partner assistance toward South Xinjiang.

Recipients	Providers		
	1997-2005	2005-2010 February	2010-present
Aksu	Shanghai Henan	Shanghai, Henan National Development and Investment company, National Electricity Group, China shipping group	Zhejiang
Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous prefecture	Jiangxi	Jiangxi, Liaoning China Huaneng group	Jiangxi Jiangsu
Kashgar	Tianjin Shandong	Tianjin, Shandong China Southern Power grid China Huaneng group China Minmetals group China general technology holding corporation China Netcom Anshan Iron& Steel Group	Guangdong Shenzhen Shanghai Shandong
Heitian	Beijing Zhejiang	Beijing, Zhejiang China Three Gorges Project Development Corporation China Electronics Corporation	Beijing Anhui Tianjin

Source: Han Lingzhi, The Partnership Assistance toward Xijiang Province and Its Influence on Local Economic Development, Metallurgical Industry Press (Beijing, 2014)

## 7. THE ROLE OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TASK ORIENTATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL NETWORK

The central government first relies on political mobilization to build the task orientated intergovernmental network. A variety of notices, orders and decisions were issued within the party system from the top to the bottom with broad media report. This pattern of political mobilization can build network swiftly, but it has limits. With over three decades' reform and opening up, political ecology in China has changed. The local governments have their own interests which differ from the central government's interest and concerns, and meanwhile the right consciousness of citizens increases remarkably. Nowadays, the real effect of political mobilization is far less than before.

Secondly, the central government depends on the promotion system to enhance the task orientated intergovernmental network. In order to improve the productivity of the local governments, the central government issues many incentive measurements, including to incorporate the political evaluation on of partner assistance of local officials, and provides the officials who participate partner assistance programs with additional approach for promotion.

Under the centralized system, the promise of the central government is useful and will encourage assistance providers to pay economic costs to gain the political benefits. However, this incentive mechanism appears unfair when we consider the different fiscal capacity of local governments. The local governments with strong fiscal capacity can fill the expectation of the central government, while other local governments cannot reach the goal. Most of assistance provides belong to the later. Therefore, the task orientated intergovernmental network can't operate fairly in most time.

Thirdly, the central government usually relies on coercive power to enact task orientated intergovernmental network. Among the assistance recipients, many regions has horrible natural condition, and is not suitable for people to live. To promote economic development in these regions is extremely difficult, if not impossible. It will demand huge investment and take long time to see the outcome. Some other recipients have rich natural resources, and their local industries are very promising and unique. A small amount of investment can make substantial difference. Most of assistance providers like these recipients. The central government doesn't allow providers to select recipients. This pressure system is not effective to force the providers to effectively supply assistance when they are not willing to do.

## 8. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE JUNCTURES OF TASK ORIENTATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL NETWORK

At first, it is easy to find "collusion between assistance providers and recipients. For instance, for the seek of improving government performance, both providers and recipients are inclined to investing limited resource into city renew, whereas input less into rural and pastoral areas.

Secondly, there are more competitions than cooperation among assistance providers. In theory, assistance providers are supposed to maintain cooperation, and in fact they fail to do that. In the partner assistance relation, "one to one", "two to one" and "several to one" are the basic pattern of intergovernmental relations, and the later two are more prevalent. The providers always compete with each other. For instance, in the disaster recovery of Wenchuan earthquake, 18 provinces and cities compete to purchase construction materials for disaster regions, which led to a striking rise in the construction materials of Sichuan province. In the Xinjiang case, as the providers were urgent to achieve success in assistance program, they invested in similar industries and programs, which led to homogenization of industry and overcapacity.

Last but not the least, assistance recipients lack mechanism to coordinate and connect each others. In the task orientated intergovernmental network, recipients only maintain

administrative connections, and few interactions exist. This situation is really conducive to socioeconomic development and the intergovernmental network.

## 9. ANALYSIS

Applying task orientated intergovernmental network to analyze China's partner assistance practice, we have four findings.

First, the current partner assistance is less formalized. Decision makers need to build institutional arrangement by law making and policy making. "Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law" in 1984, "Three Gorges Construction Immigrants Resettlement Regulation" in 1993, and "Wenchuan Earthquake Recover Regulation" in 2008 all mentioned partner assistance issue. However, these regulations are not detailed enough, and can not respond to various problems arising from the reality. Overall speaking, partner assistance policy is more like a political task which is dominated by the central government and lacks laws and specific regulations to follow. If the party-state can turn "political task" to "legal obligation", the central government can improve the legal status of this task and mobilize various entities to participate more actively. Thereby, it will essentially reduce the resistance of local government against policy implementation and the social pressure on this issue. It is necessary to promote legislature of this important public program which cost immense fiscal input, affect broad population and last long term (Zhu and Zhang, 2011).

We consider that the legislature of partner assistance should include at least five points, 1) under what conditions decision makers can launch partner assistance program, and which governments or agencies have authorities to launch assistance program; 2) which regions are qualified to accept assistance, and the requirement standards for the assistance providers; 3) the right and obligations of assistance providers and recipients; 4) the procedures, standards and coverage of partner assistance; 5) the termination conditions and procedures and so on. Under this institutional arrangement, local governments don't merely completed political tasks, but also fulfill legal obligations, and ensure the procedure legitimacy.

Secondly, the partner assistance practice exposes an important problem involving the central government and local government relation. In order to promote sustainable development of intergovernmental network, it is necessary to divide the responsibilities and borders of the central government and sub-national governments.

In many countries, the investment and assistance on less developing regions are made by the central government, few sub-national governments participate. As a centralism socialist country, it is questionable whether the central government should transfer the responsibility of supplying anti-poverty assistance to the sub-national governments. The central government is supposed to play more active role to coordinate and organize instead of assigning all tasks to the local governments.

In the assistance program toward border regions, the central government should assume the main role to assist these backward places with hard natural conditions. In the assistance program targeting the regions suffering disasters, the central government and the sub-national governments can provide fund together, add this item into governmental budget, and build fund management organization to run the fund. The alternative cooperation pattern is that the central government contributes fiscal input and the local governments provide human resources and technology. To these assistance programs for great projects, the central government can use the fiscal capacity to address program, and the local governments make supplementary effects. Generally speaking, to divide the responsibilities of the central government and the sub-national governments on partner assistance programs, it is necessary to reform the existing fiscal system, especially to reform the tax revenue distribution and improve the horizontal and vertical fiscal transfers.

Thirdly, in order to mobilize local governments to participate task orientated intergovernmental network more actively, it is necessary to formalize the interaction between local governments. It is particularly important to promote the change of local government relations from voluntary assistance to mutual benefits. To achieve this goal, the central government would better to promote economic and social integration, and build platform for both recipients and providers. The central government also needs to control over competition among assistance providers to reduce public resource waste. Besides, the central government could encourage assistance recipients to develop various regional cooperation, including to abolishing administrative barriers, to enhance economic and technical cooperation, to build industrial parks. These strategies would build solid foundation for regional economic integration, and reduce the exclusiveness of the intergovernmental network in regions.

Fourthly, in order to improve the effect of the task orientated intergovernmental network, the decision makers should introduce modern management methods, especially performance evaluation. Improving governance relies on refinement management and diverse management methods. In the policy making process, decision makers should make resource allocation plan according to long-term development goals rather than emergence and accidents. Meanwhile, assistance providers and recipients have right to participate decision making process, and during the process know the right, obligations and interest comprehensively. In addition, through conducting stringent, scientific and efficient performance evaluation system, the central government is able to improve the quality of assistance programs and the social effects of the assistance projects.

Last but not the least, decision makers could learn from foreign experience to continuously broaden and deepen the task orientated intergovernmental network, especially to introduce social organizations, private enterprises, voluntaries, and other new social forces. Let these new social forces play active roles in assistance programs. The system needs to provide social organizations, private enterprises and voluntaries more fair opportunities and gradually build healthy cooperation institution.

## 10. CONCLUSION:

Since the 1980s, China's intergovernmental relations have begun showing a trend of network. Yet, most existing researches focus on regional cooperation of developed areas, such as Yangtze River Delta and Pearl River Delta, and pay less attention to backward areas. This paper constructs the concept of task-orientated intergovernmental network, and applies it to analyze the phenomena of partner assistance, which not only helps explore theories, but also provide suggestions to China's partner assistance policies in future. Partner assistance practices in China are quite complicated, and our innovative theoretical framework can not incorporate all problems. More researches are needed in this field.

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